environment of the palace were softening the fibre of the once hardy Manchus. He is said to have sought to promote economy in the expenditures of his court, but he was restive under the criticisms of the official censors—one of the useful ways which the Chinese administrative system provided for bringing public opinion to bear on the throne—and found means of curbing them. He, too, suffered from rebellions—in Formosa and Sinkiang. None of these proved sufficiently serious to check the prosperity inherited from the first century and a half of the Ch'ing. Outwardly, in 1839, the Empire was still imposing. It was wealthy, and its population was probably increasing. It was unsound at the top, however, and disaster was imminent. When, in the first war with Great Britain, 1839-1842, China met the most significant crisis not only of the reign but of many centuries, it was in the hands of a ruling house whose best days were in the past. It is no wonder that the Chinese blundered and in the ensuing decades, by one misstep after another, stumbled, ill-prepared, into the greatest revolution of their history.

CULTURE UNDER THE GREAT CH'ING EMPERORS: ART

Chinese cultural achievements under K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung were considerable. In art there was little departure from the traditions received from the Ming. The imposing palaces and temples in Peking were maintained with but few alterations or additions. Paintings continued to be produced in great abundance, and many of them showed technical skill, refinement, and taste. Few, if any, however, seem to have displayed outstanding genius. Flowers, birds, animals, and plants were exquisitely portrayed, but the landscapes were distinctly inferior to those

of the Sung. There was much copying of old masterpieces. Beautiful works of lacquer appeared, and in carving wood, ivory, and the semi-precious stones the handicraftsmen showed elaborate diligence and cunning.

It was in porcelain that the period has its chief claim to artistic distinction. At the great potteries at Ching-te Chen the technique and command of material were perfect, and the product is justly famous. Even in this field, however, there was very little of creative genius. The patterns and colors—both polychrome and monochrome—of preceding dynasties were extensively followed,